

February 17, 2009

To the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The annual New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas has been very important to me these past few years. I took part in a one-act play put on by myself and other members of Fellowship Place that was performed at this Festival in June, 2007. It included instructive puppets that highlighted what people like myself with mental health issues can experience before and after the beginning of our recovery from mental illness.

Opportunities such as this help myself and others in circumstances comparable to mine who belong to community support centers like Fellowship Place. These support centers can, in turn, be crucial in helping people like myself become reintegrated into the community after experiencing symptoms of mental illness. In 2007, as well as in the 2008 Festival of Arts and Ideas, members of Fellowship Place had the chance to present themselves to the larger community in a positive light, both as individuals and as an organization.

In addition, I have benefited enormously from public funding for the arts, especially in music, during my childhood years. This gave me access to early experience playing and performing the violin, the recorder, and singing in grade school and before graduating from high school.

This Festival of Arts and Ideas always gives me the chance to meet other people and artists from other places and to exchange ideas with them. I hope you can find some meaning in what I just wrote here.

Sincerely,

David Firestone